

The Statue That Grew In A Night

"Peter Pan" in Kensington Gardens.

LITTLE boys and girls, and even some grown-up people, who went for a walk in Kensington Gardens one day last month had a great surprise. They actually met Peter Pan.

And then, perhaps, they were a little sorry, for they found that it was only a bronze Peter after all, and even the fairies and rabbits and tiny mice that listened to his piping were only bronze, too. But that is merely a passing disappointment. By and by they will learn to love this merry little bronze boy, who will certainly find it as difficult to grow up as though he had really flown out of a window once upon a time, and after that Peter Pan will be happy.

There was no unveiling ceremony of Sir George Frampton's charming statue, which is the gift of J. M. Barrie, the

creator of Peter Pan. It "just grew" in the most natural way possible. Early in the morning the workmen finished turning the low mound, and when they went away they took a big cloth with them—and there stood Peter blowing eternally upon his pipe of reeds, "practising the sigh of the wind and the ripple of the water."

He stands quite near the head of the Serpentine, upon the western bank, precisely at the point, in fact, where he first landed after his perilous voyage in the thrush's nest. Behind him the Hawthorns have begun to glisten with delicate snow white spray, and all around the grass is starred with daisies. Away by the bridge the chestnut tree that always comes out first because it is the first to hear Peter playing for the coming of summer is covered with great white spikes.

He has a little railed-off space and a gate—which is known as Peter Pan's gate—all to himself, and you can go inside, and walk round and round the statue, and a keeper, who is quite gentle in spite of his medals and uniform and fierce moustache, will tell you all about Peter Pan if you are so luckless as never to have heard of him.

All day long the children came to the statue, and during the day a melancholy-looking man—the only man who has a silver key to Kensington Gardens—walked by once or twice, casting furtive glances at Peter Pan, and looking terribly shy about it.

Only the Peter Pan gatekeeper knew him, and saluted him, because the gatekeeper has known Mr. J. M. Barrie for years, and thinks he is the nicest gentleman that ever wrote a fairy tale.

Sir George Frampton came along also to see how his statue looked now that it had been planted among the trees, and it was lucky that neither of them were there when an old lady walked up to the gate and said to the keeper:—

"What is that statue?"
"Peter Pan, lady," said the gatekeeper.
"Oh!" she said. "I thought it was a fountain. And who is Peter Pan?"



THE STATUE THAT GREW IN A NIGHT—MR. J. M. BARRIE'S MAY DAY SURPRISE FOR CHILDREN IN Topical, photo. KENSINGTON GARDENS.



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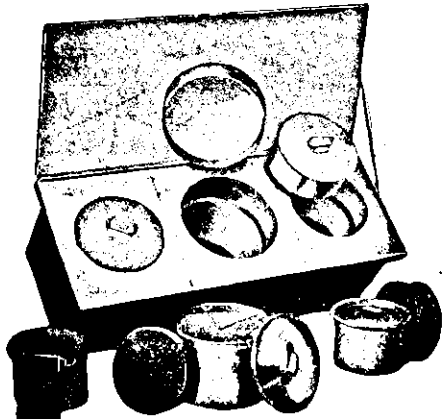
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